

HARIJAN

16 Pages

Editor: PYARELAL

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AHMEDABAD — SUNDAY, APRIL 14, 1946

[THREE ANNAS

WHAT IS IN A NAME?

(By M. K. Gandhi)

Q. From the psychological point of view, I think, the name 'Harijan' instils into the minds of the people to whom it is applied a feeling of inferiority, however sacred that name may be. This feeling is very difficult to wipe out from them — to whatever extent they are advanced — if they are always called 'Harijan'. Similarly, if a man in the street is asked about a 'Harijan' the first thing he will speak of is 'untouchability and the depressed class'. Would it not be possible to save the 'Harijan' from involuntarily acquiring such an inferiority feeling and other people from thinking about them without the 'qualification' usually ascribed to them? Would it not be preferable to choose a name which could also bring in its fold people from other sects?

A. This subject was years ago dealt with in the pages of "Young India". The name 'Harijan' has sacred associations. It was suggested by a Harijan as a substitute for *Asprishya* (untouchable), *Dalita* (depressed), or for the different categories of 'untouchables' such as *bhangis*, *mehtars*, *chamars*, *pariahs*, etc. The Government officers put them in a schedule and therefore called them the Scheduled Classes, thus making confusion worse confounded. Those who were not untouchables were classed among the scheduled and the ones who could be so called were excluded. We have now arrived at a stage, thanks to the Government policy, when to be included among the Scheduled Classes is to be coveted. The Government have created a separate electorate agitating for seats in all elective institutions. I do not mind such ambition, if it carries honest merit with it. But it becomes positively mischievous, when seats are coveted irrespective of merit. The wish to be so educated as to be qualified for the highest post is to be appreciated and encouraged, the wish to be appointed to such a post on the basis of belonging to a caste or a class is essentially to be deprecated and discouraged.

The real remedy has been suggested by me. The feeling of inferiority must go. It is going, but too slowly. The process can be accelerated, if every Hindu would deliberately shed his superiority and in practice become a Harijan or, if you like, a *mehtar*, the lowest class among Harijans. Then we will all become true children of God as the word 'Harijan' means. Until this is done, no matter which word signifies 'Untouchables', it will smell of inferiority. The process has to be carried out thoroughly in

every walk of life till the last trace of untouchability is removed. When that happy day arrives, every quarter will be a Harijan quarter and cleanliness of the heart and the home will be the order of the day.

New Delhi, 5-4-'46

WEEKLY LETTER

FIRST STEP NOT THE LAST

As in Bombay so at New Delhi Gandhiji has put up in Harijan quarters. Two small tents and a *shamiana* have been put up on the precincts of the Valmiki Mandir to improvise extra accommodation for his party. Years ago he had sent the late Shri Mahadev Desai to visit these quarters and in reporting the fine work among the Harijans that was being done by some philanthropic *Savarna* Hindus, the late Shri Desai had expressed the wish that Gandhiji might some day be able to go and stay in those quarters. It therefore gave him supreme satisfaction to be able to do so. "I have of late been saying," he remarked in his first public utterance after the evening public prayer on the day of his arrival in Delhi "that the Hindus have to become *atishudras* not merely in name but in thought, word and deed. For that token scavenging is not enough. I have therefore decided that I must go and actually live among Harijans in Harijan quarters."

"I however do not delude myself with the belief," he continued, "that by staying here I am sharing the actual life with the Harijans. I have seen some Harijan quarters and the squalor, the dirt and the filth in the midst of which the Harijans live. I know too that this place has been brightened up. Indeed, I feel embarrassed by the amenities that have been provided here by Sheth Birla for me and my party. My coming to stay here, I hope, is my first step, not the last. It is my constant prayer and I look forward to the day when I would actually go and stay in a Harijan hut, and partake of the food they may provide me there. In the meantime, it gives me some satisfaction to be able to live in this *dharmashala* surrounded by Harijan dwellings on all sides."

Referring next to a hostile demonstration which a certain section of the Harijans had tried to stage on his arrival, he observed: "How can I feel angry with them? I can quite understand their pent up resentment at the way in which they have been treated by the so-called *Savarnas*. They might even want to wreak vengeance. There is such a glaring contradiction between our profession and practice. They have a right to feel impatient. I can only

plead with them to bear with the Hindu society. An age-old evil cannot be eradicated in a day. I know it has to go or Hinduism must perish. In the meantime the least expiation that we can make is to share with the Harijans their disabilities and to deny ourselves the privileges which the latter cannot share. The present conditions under which they live should be intolerable even for a day to a decent-minded person. I pray for the time when the condition of life, as regards sanitation, cleanliness etc. in Harijan quarters will be such that even a person like myself might be able to go and stay there without any compunction."

Public prayer which in the beginning used to be held on the precincts of the Valmiki Mandir had soon to be shifted to the spacious maidan outside Ajmeri Gate for lack of sufficient accommodation. He had appealed on the first day that no one should come to the prayer gatherings merely for the sake of *darshana*. Only those should come who were earnest about prayer. But the crowd continued to swell daily and necessitated the change.

ZERO HOUR

The mission which brought Gandhiji there has been keeping him wholly occupied from early in the morning till night. To the strain of work is added the concern as to how the people will behave when the zero hour of India's independence arrives after the long servitude under the British rule full of bitter memories which are hard to forget. He is aware of the deep hatred of the British rule that is in the people's breast. What if it should break out in a conflagration? To forestall and prevent such a tragedy all his energies are bent. On Saturday last it kept him awake for the better part of the night. "I have been praying to God to give me the right word," he remarked to one of his companions in describing the night's vigil, "so that it will induce those to whom it is addressed to act with the courage and wisdom which the occasion demands."

During the week he accepted an invitation to attend a silent prayer service of the Friends and paid a visit to the I. N. A. camp and hospital. He summed up his reactions to the latter in a speech which will be found reproduced elsewhere.

New Delhi, 9-4-46

PYARELAL

By M. K. Gandhi
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THE MESSAGE OF THE I. N. A.

The day after his visit to the I. N. A. prisoners Gandhiji said at the evening public prayer:

"Let me share with you the thoughts that have been crowding in my mind since yesterday. India has accorded to the released I. N. A. men a right royal welcome. They have been acclaimed as national heroes. Everybody seems to have been swept off his feet before the rising tide of popular sentiment. I must, however, frankly confess to you that I do not share this indiscriminate hero worship. I admire the ability, sacrifice and patriotism of the I. N. A. and Netaji Bose. But I cannot subscribe to the method which they adopted and which is incompatible with the one followed by the Congress for the last twentyfive years for the attainment of independence. Yesterday I spoke to you of a *Sahat-vrajna* (सहव्रज) i. e. "the man of steady wisdom", i. e. a Satyagrahi. If we accept that ideal we would not regard anybody as our enemy; we must shed all enmity and ill will. That ideal is not meant for the select few—the saint or the seer only; it is meant for all. I have described myself as a scavenger having become one, not only in name but in fact, while I was in Phoenix. It was there that I took up the bucket and the broom, impelled by the inner urge to identify myself with the lowest of the low. As a humble fellow toiler, then, let me bear witness that anyone, even a simple-minded villager who wants to and tries, can attain the state of mental equipoise described in the Gita verses which are recited at the prayer. We all lose our sanity at times, though we may not care to admit it or be even aware of it. A man with a steady mind will never lose patience, even with a child, or indulge in anger or abuse. Religion as taught in the Gita is a thing to be practised in this life. It is not a means for attaining merit in the next irrespective of what you may do here. That would be a negation of religion.

"For me the visit to the I. N. A. men in detention was a matter of pure duty. It gave me supreme satisfaction to be able to meet them, and they on their part received me with a warmth of affection which I shall always treasure. I have interpreted their welcome as a token of their recognition in me of a devoted servant of the country.

"Netaji was like a son to me. I came to know him as a lieutenant full of promise under the late Deshabandhu Das. His last message to the I. N. A. was that, whilst on foreign soil they had fought with arms, on their return to India they would have to serve the country as soldiers of non-violence under the guidance and leadership of the Congress. The message which the I. N. A. has for India is not adoption of the method of appeal to arms for settling disputes (it has been tried and found wanting), but of cultivating non-violence, unity, cohesion and organization.

"Though the I. N. A. failed in their immediate objective they have a lot to their credit of which they might well be proud. Greatest among these was to gather together under one banner men from

them the spirit of solidarity and oneness to the utter exclusion of all communal or parochial sentiment. It is an example which we should all emulate. If they did this under the glamour and romance of fighting, it was not much. It must persist in peace. It is a higher and more difficult work. We have to die performing our duty and without killing. For that we shall need to cultivate the attributes of a *Shitaprajna* as set forth in the Gita.

"Far more potent than the strength of the sword is the strength of Satyagraha. I said so to the I. N. A. men and they were happy to tell me, as I was to hear, that they had realized this and would hereafter strive to serve India as true soldiers of non-violence under the Congress flag."

New Delhi, 8-4-'46

PYARELAL

VANASPATI AND GHEE

(By M. K. Gandhi)

Sardar Sir Datar Singh has been putting up a fight on behalf of the cow in India. The cow includes the buffalo. In that case both can live. If the buffalo includes the cow then both die. "The cow is the mother of prosperity." To understand how this is so, the reader should see Shri Satish Chandra Das Gupta's two instructive volumes. Here I want to confine myself to ghee which is in danger of being swamped by *Vanaspati*, as the so-called vegetable ghee is called. In reality ghee is pure animal product. One thoughtlessly uses the expression vegetable ghee or *Vanaspati*; but it is a contradiction in terms. Sardar Datar Singh has shown in a considered note that the sale of *Vanaspati* has risen from 26,000 tons in 1937 to 137,000 tons in 1945, i. e., it has increased more than 400 per cent. during seven years. *Pari passu* the ghee industry has declined. Those who would study the whole note should procure a copy from Sardar Datar Singh or the Goseva Sangh in Wardha. I condense below the Sardar's conclusions:

1. *Vanaspati* as an article of diet is a very poor substitute for ghee. It not only lacks absorption by the human system, but has no vitamin potency.

2. Due to its similarity with ghee in texture and flavour, most of it is being used as an adulterant or is passed off as genuine ghee and is therefore a great menace to ghee.

3. Due to great margin of profit in this industry, it has developed from 26 thousand tons per annum in 1937 to 105 thousand tons in 1943 and there are proposals afoot to at least double this production in the near future.

4. The ghee industry is India's greatest cottage industry involving production of 23,000,000 maunds of ghee per annum at a cost of one hundred crores of rupees.

5. The destruction of the ghee industry will not only adversely affect the welfare of the cultivators, but it will have a very deleterious effect on the cattle industry upon which the prosperity of the whole nation directly depends.

'The Cow in India' vol. I. Rs 10/-, vol. II. Rs. 7/-: both together Rs. 16/-. Postage Rs. 1-9-0. Can be had from the office of this paper, or Khali Pratishthan, Sodapur, Calcutta.

In order to overcome the difficulties explained above, the following remedial measures are suggested:

1. If due to some reasons the Government cannot actually ban the manufacture altogether of *Vanaspati*, it must at least be brought under strict control immediately.

2. All manufacturers, and wholesale and retail dealers of *Vanaspati* should be licensed. Such persons should not be permitted to trade in or stock ghee on their premises.

3. It should be made compulsory to colour all *Vanaspati*, at the source of its manufacture in India and to colour all such imported product immediately on its landing at an Indian port. Manufacturers must mix ten per cent. of *til* oil with *Vanaspati*. The advantage of this would be that if pure ghee is adulterated with *Vanaspati* containing 10% *til* oil, the detection will become extremely simple. The presence of *til* oil can be most easily detected by well-known chemical reactions.

4. The addition of synthetic essences to give *Vanaspati* a semblance of ghee should be prohibited.

5. Persons selling food products in the preparation of which they use *Vanaspati* should be required, under marketing law, to display a sign to that effect. The presence of *Vanaspati* on the premises not displaying the sign should be made an offence under law. This will eradicate the evil of *Haiwas* and confectioners using *Vanaspati* for their preparations and passing them off as made from genuine ghee.

6. *Vanaspati* should not be allowed to go in the market under names such as 'Vegetable ghee' or '*Vanaspati* ghee' or any other name which is apt to deceive the customers as to its real origin of composition.

7. *Vanaspati* should not be allowed to be marketed in packages of the same pattern as used for packing ghee and all packages containing *Vanaspati* should be distinctly labelled.

It is clear that the mischief arises principally from the greed of the very persons who worship the cow. *Vanaspati* is wholly superfluous. Oils may be refined of injurious property, but they do not need to be solidified nor need they be made to look like ghee. An honest manufacturer will not stoop to counterfeits. The market is flooded with them. Counterfeit coins are heavily punishable. Why not counterfeit ghee, since the genuine article is much more precious than coins? But the sovereign remedy lies in all round honesty among dealers who are in a hurry to become rich even at the cost of the health of the nation.

New Delhi, 8-4-'46

TO AGENTS

Permission for issuing sixteen pages of the three Harijan weeklies on special occasions has been granted. In view of this we have decided to price copies of the weeklies with 12 or more pages at *annas three*. Agents will please take note of this and add necessary amount to their deposit.

MANAGER

HARIJAN

April 14

1946

LET US PRAY

(By M. K. Gandhi)

There is little doubt that India is about to reach her cherished goal of political independence. Let the entrance be prayerful. Prayer is not an old woman's idle amusement. Properly understood and applied, it is the most potent instrument of action.

Let us then pray and find out what we have meant by non-violence and how we shall retain the freedom gained by its use. If our non-violence is of the weak, it follows that we shall never be able, by such non-violence, to retain freedom. But it follows also that we shall not, for some length of time at any rate, be able to defend ourselves by force of arms if only because we have neither them nor the knowledge of their use. We have not even the requisite discipline. The result is that we shall have to rely upon another nation's help, not as equals but as pupils upon their teachers, if the word 'inferiors' jars upon our ears.

Hence there is nothing but non-violence to fall back upon for retaining our freedom even as we had to do for gaining it. This means exercise of non-violence against all those who call themselves our opponents. This should not mean much for a man who has used himself to non-violence for nearly three decades. It is summed up in "die for your honour and freedom" instead of "kill if necessary and be killed in the act". What does a brave soldier do? He kills only if necessary and risks his life in the act. Non-violence demands greater courage and sacrifice. Why should it be comparatively easy for a man to risk death in the act of killing and almost superhuman for him to do so in the act of sparing life? It seems to be gross self-deception to think that we can risk death if we learn and practise the art of killing but cannot do so otherwise. But for the hypnotism induced by the repetition of an untruth we should not grossly deceive ourselves.

But the critic or the scoffer will ask, why bring in prayer if the matter is so simple as you put it. The answer is that prayer is the first and the last lesson in learning the noble and brave art of sacrificing self in the various walks of life culminating in the defence of one's nation's liberty and honour.

Undoubtedly prayer requires a living faith in God. Successful Satyagraha is inconceivable without that faith. God may be called by any other name so long as it connotes the living Law of Life—in other words, the Law and the Law-giver rolled into one.

New Delhi. 6-4-'46

QUESTION BOX

(By M. K. Gandhi)

Q. God is a creation of man's imagination. It is not God who has created man but man who has created God. Is this not true?

A. I have taken this from a correspondent's letter. There is a semblance of truth in what he says. The writer has, however unwittingly, created the illusion by a play upon the two words "creation" and "God".

God Himself is both the Law and the Law-giver. The question of anyone creating Him, therefore, does not arise, least of all by an insignificant creature such as man. Man can build a dam, but he cannot create a river. He can manufacture a chair, but it is beyond him to make the wood. He can, however, picture God in his mind in many ways. But how can man who is unable to create even a river or wood create God? That God has created man is, therefore, the pure truth. The contrary is an illusion. However, anyone may, if he likes, say that God is neither the deer nor the cause. Either is predicable of Him.

New Delhi.

4-4-'46

(From Harijanbandhu)

KASTURBA LEPROSY WORK

(By M. K. Gandhi)

This work has been going on under Prof. T. N. Jagdisan's supervision since 19th May 1945. He has produced a short summary of the work done from day to day. Dr. T. S. S. Rajan is the chairman of the committee specially formed for this work. Dr. V. P. Ramaswami has specially trained himself for the work under Dr. R. G. Cochrane. He is doing out-patient work as well as conducting surveys of villages.

The first survey in Kandachipuram schools of 655 children revealed that apart from leprosy there was a high incidence of scabies and guinea worm. Over 100 children have to be followed up and 30-40 treated for leprosy. In Madavilagam village 18 definite cases of leprosy have been discovered out of 593 inhabitants. Four of these are infective and fourteen neural. Infection is spread by indiscriminate contact of infective cases with children.

In Adukkam village 15 cases have been found out of a population of 323. Five of these are infective. Two other places have 29 and 15 definite cases respectively of which 9 are lepromatous.

Dr. Ramaswami has also surveyed five more villages and has so far detected 300 cases out of which 157 only, being women or children under seven years, can benefit from the Trust.

Prof. T. N. Jagdisan's summary points out that poor men patients though in need of attention cannot get the benefit of the funds. This defect cannot be removed by any departure from the terms of the Trust, but the professor can easily raise a small fund locally and bring them within the scope of his work.

New Delhi,

4-4-'45

GANDHIJI'S IDEAL OF A PRIVATE SECRETARY

(Continued from No. 1)

II

The late Shri Mahadev Desai was the beau ideal of a secretary of Gandhiji's conception. Gandhiji once described him as son, secretary and lover rolled into one. On another occasion he described the latter's relationship with him as that of a 'Hindu wife'—mutually complementary and indissoluble; it was a "marriage of true souls". It would not be therefore out of place to give here an epitome of his career with Gandhiji.

After his university career and a varied experience, first as a clerk in the Oriental Translator's Office during which he was much in request as a friend in need not only by his colleagues but his superiors also, then as a lawyer and as an Inspector of Co-operative Societies, followed by a short spell of private secretaryship to a well-known Bombay Home-Rule Leaguer. He came to Gandhiji in 1917 at Kochrab Ashram and immediately realized that he had found the master. His first experience here was as a copyist and amanuensis. He not only won Gandhiji's admiration by producing faultless copies in his elegant, print-like hand at an incredible speed but brought to bear his intelligence and critical faculty on his work, suggesting alterations and improvements in the original wherever necessary. When, some time later, he held back from publication, on his own initiative, an article that Gandhiji had sent, as it seemed to contain a statement or an argument of doubtful character, Gandhiji on his part felt that he had found his ideal secretary.

In those early days, before the Mahatmic handicap forced upon Gandhiji the irony of travelling in third-class reserved bogies, he used to travel often in the ordinary third-class all by himself. After Shri Desai joined him he accompanied him on these journeys and acted as his (Gandhiji's) *hammal*. He looked after Gandhiji's travelling kit, made his bed, cooked his food, washed his thick, heavy Khadi clothes and cleaned his commode, besides rendering secretarial assistance. After the successful Champaran Satyagraha campaign, he settled down with Gandhiji in Motihari, where with his wife and other co-workers he taught the three R's to the village children. It was also during this period that he had his real schooling in those values and norms that have come to be associated with Gandhiji's name, e. g. simplicity coupled with elegance, meticulous regard for neatness and cleanliness, capacity for concentration in the midst of turmoil and chaos, preference for manual skill over mechanical perfection and a passionate love of the mother tongue. "He would insist on my writing the most important dispatches on the crudest hand-made paper and that too with a reed pen!", he once told me. "He was proud of my hand-writing, said, it was good enough for any Viceroy, no matter how and on what paper I wrote. Sometimes, he even snatched away the steel pen from my hand and flung it out of the railway carriage window." In the use of Gujarati the disciple

soon learnt to excel the master and in later years often claimed for himself the role of Gandhiji's instructor in Gujarati, a claim which Gandhiji has since often admitted.

Right through the War Conference days (1916) and the Anti-Rowlatt Act Agitation, he followed Gandhiji like a shadow, quietly watching, assimilating, rehearsing. Then came the Khilafat and non-cooperation movements and Gandhiji was sucked into the vortex of the unprecedented storm that overswept the country. That gave Shri Desai his chance; he found himself. He began writing his compendious Boswellian diaries which continued without a break till practically his last day. The last entry, I think, is dated August 14, 1942. On the morning of the 15th he was no more. Wisdom was gleaned and garnered in these tomes straight from the master's lips. So great was his passion for recording that lacking paper, I have actually seen him taking down jottings of important talks on the margin of newspapers, backs of currency notes, sometimes even on thumb and finger nails, to be transferred to the regular note book at the first opportunity. He constituted himself into a living encyclopædia of Gandhiji's thoughts and ideas and a final court of appeal where the authenticity of a particular act or utterance ascribed to Gandhiji could be checked and verified. No one dared to misquote or misrepresent Gandhiji during Shri Desai's lifetime without the Nasmyth hammer of the latter descending upon him with all the weight of the evidence of his contemporary notes.

It would be difficult to enumerate all the varied assignments, some of them of a highly confidential and even unbelievable nature (alas! they cannot be divulged), which he fulfilled for Gandhiji with a D'Artagnanlike unfailing fidelity and success. Throughout his career I do not remember a single occasion when he failed Gandhiji in an emergency or left him in the lurch. As co-editor with the late George Joseph of the 'Independent' of Allahabad and later, on the latter's arrest, as the sole editor of that daily, he won warm encomiums from the fastidious and exacting late Pandit Motilal Nehru by his personal charm and highly specialized knowledge of Gandhiji and his non-cooperation technique, no less than by his trenchant and versatile pen. When security was demanded of that paper he closed it and under Gandhiji's instructions brought it out in manuscript form. Some of his colleagues on the staff, new to Gandhiji's ways, could not appreciate the new venture and felt it to be a bit *infra dig* to cooperate in it. I happened to be there at that time, having been sent by Gandhiji to "keep the flag flying" in the event of Shri Desai's arrest which was considered imminent. Nothing daunted by the non-cooperation of his colleagues, Shri Desai told them that he had not served apprenticeship under Gandhiji in vain and would bring out the paper unassisted, if it came to that; and brought out it was, that very evening, the first copy being all in Shri Desai's own beautiful hand. I think it fetched a fancy price of Rs. 250/-.

After the Bardoli Satyagraha of 1928 he was sent by Gandhiji to assist Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in the collection and marshalling of evidence before the Broomfield Inquiry Committee. Such was the impression he created by his ability and integrity that before the end of the inquiry both Judge Broomfield and Sir Reginald Maxwell claimed him as a 'friend'. That each expressed his 'friendship' in his own typical way, the one by writing him "love letters", the other by issuing orders for his rigorous isolation, almost amounting to solitary confinement in Belgaum prison, is a different story.

By nature Shri Desai was rather of the contemplative and scholarly type. Action was not his forte. Taking orders, rather than issuing them was his chief delight. "I am more accustomed to stand behind a chair than in front of one", he once wittily remarked when called by the chairman to come alongside of him and address a public meeting. But when occasion demanded it he plunged into the fray with the same wholeheartedness and sense of devotion as characterized him in other fields. A typical illustration of this was afforded in 1930 at the time of the Dandi March, when in the absence of the Sardar, he set the whole of Gujarat from one end to the other ablaze with Satyagraha.

As he progressed from apprenticeship to maturity, he showed more and more initiative and capacity for handling important missions all by himself. But to the last he remained like Arjuna, with all his marvellous bowmanship, essentially a virtuoso, a faithful instrument in the hand of the master, the inspirer.

At the time of the Rajkot fast he was at New Delhi undergoing treatment for an illness from which he really never recovered. But as soon as he got the news, he left his sick bed without a moment's thought and set to work contacting the highest officials, including Lord Linlithgow. It was his faithful and able presentation of Gandhiji's viewpoint before those concerned that contributed not a little to the settlement in favour of Gandhiji and the Sardar. After the Gwyer Award, he accompanied Gandhiji to Rajkot, where even Darbar Veerawalla found it impossible to resist him after the glowing account he had of him from the cynical, hard-boiled Sir Bertrand Glancy, whom Shri Desai had met at New Delhi as the head of the Political Department of the Government of India.

During the individual Satyagraha of 1940, he denied himself the luxury of jail-going as he did not want to leave Gandhiji short-handed. But soldier-like he set out later to collect the 5 lakhs fund for the Gujarat Flood Relief work in the absence of the Sardar and completed it by working even when he was laid on his back with double pneumonia. Again, he set out to organize peace brigades in Ahmedabad at the time of the Hindu-Muslim riots, leaving his wife on what was believed by the doctors to be her death bed, with the same unflinching devotion to duty as he had shown on a previous occasion, when with streaming eyes, he finished his writing for *Navajivan* before setting

out for his village home on receiving the news of his father's death.

In the intervals there was of course the killing daily grind of office routine which sometimes made him complain of what he humorously used to call his "dog's life". His versatility was equal to his industry. He was equally at home in taking on visitors who came to discuss high politics with Gandhiji as in settling intricate "domestics" of the Ashram. He kept accounts, drew up tour programmes for Gandhiji with the help of railway maps and Bradshaw, kept dates for him, answered letters, looked after guests, often trudged from Maganwadi to Sevagram Ashram and back—a distance of over five miles either way—in the blazing hot sun, day after day and week after week, to take instructions, besides writing for Harijan with a clock-work regularity. This last was a marvel, considering that his work had often to be done in the caravanserai that his office was or in overcrowded third-class railway compartments with undisciplined, shouting crowds struggling at the carriage windows at every station. The wonder of it was that in the midst of it all he was able to do all the encyclopaedic reading, hard thinking and research which went into his writings.

He was not merely an interpreter of Gandhiji's ideas, he was a "fisher of men" and brought scores of enthusiastic, idealistic workers to his fold by the charm of his magnetic personality. Wherever, under whatever circumstances he was, that place became a centre and citadel of the master. And who could go forth on a 'goodwill mission' on behalf of Gandhiji better than Shri Desai? The late Deshabandhu Das doted on him, his sister having constituted herself into his adoptive mother, Dr. Jayakar could not do less than respond to his appeal by raising his subscription to the Tilak Swaraj Fund from Rs. 5,000/- to Rs. 25,000/ whilst the Rt. Hon. Shastri welcomed his visits as a 'spiritual exercise'.

In Gandhiji's 'family' of workers he was the cementing bond, the shock absorber, the activizer. He smoothed differences, soothed frayed tempers, solved personal problems, resolved doubts, pulled people out of trouble when they landed themselves in it and negotiated delicate points with Gandhiji when it called for extraordinary tact and his 'masterly manner', for which he had become famous. He was extremely popular owing to his over flowing kindness, goodness of heart, broad sympathy and understanding and his willingness and capacity to serve and lend a helping hand whenever there was a chance, to all and sundry.

For instance, Gandhiji could give only limited time to his visitors who came for consultation. He could speak to them in *snatches* only. But Shri Desai made up for Gandhiji's "Be quick, be brief, be gone" motto that hangs on the wall of his hut above his head, and the visitors as a rule did not feel satisfied unless they could round off their interview with Gandhiji with a good heart-to-heart talk with his secretary. It was also his unpleasant duty to keep off undesirable visitors. And what a

motley crowd he had sometimes to deal with, ranging from dyspeptics and food faddists to dilettantes, literateurs, blue stockings, tourists, pressmen and politicians, seekers after metaphysical knowledge, sometimes even lunatics! All this required a Job's patience. No wonder sometimes when a particularly sticky customer claimed him, even his suavity could not keep down a persecuted and martyred look on his face which was pathetic to behold. Friends discreetly avoided his gaze on such occasions lest they might betray a smile on the wrong side of the face! But he was happy in the knowledge that it meant saving thousands of precious hours of the master for the service of the country and humanity.

Let no one, however, imagine that he was merely a "faithful echo" of the master. When occasion demanded he could also speak up to him, since Gandhiji expects his secretary, and in fact any one who is closely associated with him, to be his conscience keeper too. He was often prized as a tower of strength by those who brought to Gandhiji a different viewpoint from his own, and he himself was able on one occasion to avert an unconditional fast unto death on the part of Gandhiji when every one else had failed. It is the only instance of its kind in Gandhiji's entire life within my knowledge.

On occasions, but very rare occasions, there were brushes. These were invariably of the nature of "lovers' quarrels". Once Shri Desai likened his association with Gandhiji to sitting on the top of a volcano which might erupt at any moment. At Delang the "quarrel" even found its way into the weekly letter when, in a moment of desperation, the devoted secretary exclaimed with Dr. Halliday Sutherland (*Arches of the Years*) that "to live with saints in heaven" was "a bliss and a glory", but "to live with a saint on earth" was "a different story". The article itself was of a piece with the quotation. With characteristic coolness, Gandhiji blue-pencilled portions of the truant disciple's outpourings to "save him against himself", suitably corrected the rest and published the whole in Harijan! On another occasion, when exasperated by the heavy demands made by rules* of Ashram life, he tendered his resignation, Gandhiji tore it up saying that it did not bear evidence of "coherent thinking" and therefore could not be accepted as an indication of "Mahadev's real mind". The ending was equally characteristic. Before many hours the "blues" had completely worn off and the ardent secretary was explaining to the appreciative master the beauties of a gorgeous sunset. But it reduced the sensitive Shri Desai to tears when Gandhiji once gently rebuked him (it was reproach more than rebuke) for an inadvertant error in description by remarking, "Is it thus you are going to interpret me after my death?"

It has become the fashion these days to compare the late Shri Desai with Boswell. The comparison might hold good so far as passion for gathering and recording biographical material of their respective masters was concerned. But there the comparison

ends. In moral and intellectual stature they were as poles asunder. Shri Desai was great in his own right. Boswell's attitude towards his master was that of an ardent hero-worshipper and a cheap and vulgar one at that at times. Shri Desai's attitude towards Gandhiji was that of a spiritual devotee to his *guru* and a lover of the motherland towards the promised deliverer.

Shri Desai's was a consecrated life characterized by a rare singleminded devotion to Gandhiji and his ideals. Gandhiji lived for the world but Shri Desai lived for Gandhiji. In one of Goethe's plays every one who gazes into the face of the heroine sees in it the countenance of his beloved. In the case of the late Shri Desai, it was the reverse; he lived only to read the lineaments of his master in every celebrated character of history or legend that he contemplated whether it was Asquith or William of Orange, Ruskin or Tolstoy, Marx, Lenin or Masaryk, Fenelon or St. Francis of Assisi. In the immortal lines of Moore:

"The moon looks into many brooks

The brook can see no moon but this."

I have been asked to set down as addenda the experiences of Shri Mahadev Desai's successor in office. The truth of the matter is that the late Shri Mahadev Desai was not a mere occupant of an office, he was an institution. His office began and ended with himself. He left behind him no successor.

9-9-45

PYARELAL

CHRISTIANS AND POLITICS

If we hold ourselves to be Christians we have to follow the principles laid down by Jesus in every walk of life. Politics is only one aspect of our social relations but we must carry these principles into that sphere also if we enter politics. Let us therefore analyse Jesus' attitude to such a career.

At the very beginning of His ministry we have a record of the temptations He met with. These will give us the main lines of approach.

He was hungry after a fast of forty days. He was tempted to convert stones into bread. He brushed that idea aside as "man does not live by bread alone". Do we want to enter politics to make a livelihood out of it? This is too base an ideal for those who would follow Jesus.

He was asked to jump down from the steeple as angels would bear Him up. Do we wish to enter the councils to demonstrate our powers of oratory and personal talents? God did not endow us with powers to glorify ourselves.

Satan wanted Jesus to fall down and worship him promising Him the gift of all the kingdoms of the Earth. Is politics a means of getting control over our fellowmen? Do we aspire to becoming ministers to wield power over our neighbours? That is not the way of Jesus.

What is this service of God? "I was an hungered and ye fed me, naked and ye clothed me, sick and ye visited me". "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, ye have done it unto me". This is then the field for all who would

*The rule in question was soon after rescinded.

follow Him who went about doing good. His whole life was based not on man's rights but on his duties to his neighbour. Can we under such allegiance form ourselves into a community fighting for its rights and privileges? Is it not a denial of our Lord to seek after these things? Did not Jesus teach us by the parable of the good Samaritan that we should help those in need irrespective of whether the needy belong to our group or not. The priest the Levite passed by on the other side of the one who was wounded and robbed by thieves but the Samaritan, though he was despised, came to the rescue and ministered to him. Shall we not do likewise?

Generally when people talk of communities in relation to politics they mean to secure power for safeguarding their own interests. This is diametrically opposed to the teachings of Jesus and it is definitely unchristian.

A few days ago a small deputation of Indian Christians waited on the M. P. Delegates to represent their case! How far have we drifted from the Master who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not.

Some of the leaders of the community waited on the Viceroy on another occasion begging him to form an Indian Christian Regiment! Do we realize the blasphemy of this? We seek to learn cold-blooded murder as a profession and we call ourselves by the name of the Prince of Peace who taught us not to resist with evil "but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also". Here we are petitioning Government to teach us to kill those whom we have never met and who have never done us any personal harm.

The irony of fate has it that this community has enlisted freely into this murder gang otherwise euphemistically called the military. Even the softer sex has been so tempted by mammon as to join in the auxiliaries forgetting the gentleness of their sex. Does not all this arise out of our illegitimate desire for the things of the world? Let us always remember that the Master we profess to serve had not where to lay His head. Can we expect better treatment or reward than what was meted out to Him? He died on the cross and His crown was a crown of thorns. Are we prepared to drink of the cup He drank or do we think that He drank the bitter cup to procure for us licence for unrestricted indulgence?

Do we seek to get into politics so as to be honoured of men? Worldly ones seek to exercise authority over others. But it should not be so amongst us. Whoever will be chief must be the servant of all. Jesus says He came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many. If we must compete let us compete in serving others. Let us win the love and confidence of others by our dedicated lives. Let us give up this humiliating begging for favours and high seats.

The only community Jesus recognizes is a community of servants. He that doeth the will of the Father the same is my brother, sister and mother.

Let us strive to be numbered within this select family. The Master calls, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." Shall we not pay heed to this invitation?

J. C. KUMARAPPA

BEWARE OF BUREAUCRATIC PLANS

I

In September last, Reuter cabled from Washington that a mission headed by a British knight was visiting the United States, "after five months' stay in England" in connection with the present irresponsible Government of India's project to set up a factory for the manufacture of 3½ million tons of ammonium sulphate yearly at an expenditure of 40,000,000 dollars or over 12 crores of rupees.

But no greater misfortune could perhaps befall the people of India than that their land should be poisoned with artificial fertilizers, the use of which has been condemned by British authorities on agriculture themselves.

We must replace what we take from the soil. The harvesting of crops leads to the impoverishment of the soil which should be replenished by cattle dung and by ploughing in of grasses (see Joseph James' *Must We Starve?* distributed by F. Muller). But chemical fertilizers affect the soil in much the same way as drugs affect the human body. They produce temporary exhilaration, and then there is a relapse. Bumper crops are obtained but they cause new diseases and deficiencies in the soil. Balfour in *Living Soil* quotes from a circular letter sent by Sir Albert Howard:

"In the South of France grapes are raised very largely by means of artificials: the many diseases are combated by poison sprays.

"In Baluchistan on the other hand the vine is always manured with farm-yard manure; artificials are not used; the crops have no need for fungicides and insecticides, because diseases are practically non-existent."

British writers hold that crop diseases which are on the increase in England are due to artificials. James quotes from Lord Lymington who says:

"Twenty years ago potatoes were sprayed with copper sulphate mixtures once or perhaps twice in a year, but now they are sprayed twelve or fifteen times a season. Nearly all this is due to loss of organic manure for land and proper balance of farming" (*Famine in England*).

Chemical sprays affect the crops adversely and shorten considerably the life of the soil itself.

Lord Lymington is of the opinion that artificial manures are highly dangerous:

"The processes of life depend as much on decay as on growth. Healthy growth can only take place when there has been proper decay of organic matter which becomes humus. This can only be brought about by the working of soil bacteria. Reckless use of sulphate of ammonia, nitro-chalk, potash and other salts kills these bacteria, and so the plant cannot remain healthy when there is no humus in the soil."

Animal and human diseases no less than crop diseases are caused by artificials. £6 a year is the amount of money spent in England per head on medicines, and the cost of animal disease is estimated at one tenth of the farmer's total return from stock.

Foot and mouth disease is prevalent in England and the infected animals are sent to the slaughter house, stock movements being prohibited within a radius of fifteen miles from the parts affected by the disease. But Howard testifies that his oxen in India fed on compost-grown food failed to contract the disease, even when 'rubbing noses' with infected animals.

Balfour quotes from a correspondent who wrote :

"Cabbages . . . grown too fast with nitrate and phosphate are a curious 'wrong' colour. If over 50 p. c. of the green stuff given to rabbits is of this sort the rabbits die. If the phosphate goes beyond a certain point the field takes on an unnatural green and is deserted by wild rabbits." Salesmen use this as a recommendation: 'Use our soluble phosphate fertilizer and keep the rabbits away', or 'Use enough nitro-chalk, and you will get big greens that rabbits will scarcely touch; if they do, they die'.

It was found that cattle refused to graze in a field dressed with artificials.

Balfour also cites the case of a school which at first raised its vegetables with artificials and then with the Indore compost. The Head Master said that at first cold, measles and scarlet fever used to run through the school, but afterwards they tended to be confined to single cases imported from outside. There was also definite improvement in the taste and the quality of the vegetables.

McCarrison, when in charge of the Deficiency Diseases Inquiry in India, found that when wheat was grown on soil treated with farm-yard manure, its nutritive value was 17 per cent higher than when grown on soil treated with complete chemical manure. Wheat grown under the latter condition contained a smaller amount of vitamin A, which is essential in maintaining the resistance of man and his domestic animals to infectious diseases.

McCarrison also found that 'if the vitamin B value of cattle manure millet be taken as 1, that of chemical manure millet is approximately .66'.

II

Another item in these plans is the mechanization of agriculture. But as Lord Northbourne warns us in his *Look to the Land* (Dent), "mechanization can be a terrible snare, as it makes possible the kind of soil exploitation which has led to desert making on a scale hitherto unparalleled."

British farmers who have mechanized their agricultural operations have many lessons to teach us, and it is up to us to profit by what they themselves admit to be their mistakes.

For one thing the machines are too heavy for the maintenance of soil health. Lawns deteriorate when a motor lawn-mower is used.

The many-shared plough works too fast. With a single-share ox or horse-driven plough it took quite

a number of days to finish a big farm. Flocks of birds alert for grubs and worms followed the plough. But what took quite a week before is now done in a single day, so that birds have no time to clean the soil. British farmers therefore complain of serious increase in wireworm.

But the loss in soil cleanliness is only half the story. The loss in humus is still more disquieting. The horse or the ox never moved over a field without enriching the soil. The motor tractor moves over the field but gives nothing. Five lakhs of horses have been eliminated from the British army and from British towns during the last twenty years with the result that a million acres of land in Britain get no dung and there is a corresponding loss of soil fertility.

The plant-animal-man cycle has been broken in England in a variety of ways, and the consequences have been always bad. As Michael Graham points out in *Soil and Sense* (Faber) the British housewife limits the size of her family, thus throwing shepherds out of work and reducing farmers to bankruptcy. The number of sheep is down by one million a year, so that although Britain badly needs wheat, there are not enough sheep to tread and manure the soil.

In fact, so-called scientific farming is too exhaustive and therefore ultimately destructive all over the world, as for instance in Egypt, where "the soils have steadily deteriorated with the introduction of a more efficient technique" (*Rape of the Earth*).

Mechanized farming in England also called for the wholesale destruction of hedges which according to E. B. Balfour is responsible for the increase in insect pests, for "with the hedge has gone the shelter for the small birds who prey on insects." Fields in England were formerly small. There was an abundance of hedge-rows and frequent trees which did much in the windy climate of Britain to "maintain the soil in position and to increase its productivity." But the size of the fields is now enlarged in order to accommodate modern farming machinery.

Such being the experience of British farmers, may it not be that the failure of the United States to supply us with even 500 tractors while she is delivering 50,000 tractors to Russia and 20,000 more to France is only a blessing in disguise?

Two years before A. E. died, the Government of the United States invited him to come and see what was wrong with agriculture. The apparatus had been perfected, but workers were refusing to carry on. A. E. found excessive organization had destroyed the soul of the thing; machinery so intruded between man, soil and beast that man could not bear work any longer.

Let us bear in mind these wise words of Lord Northbourne:

"The very best in farming as in all other crafts can only be produced by hand, and less than the best will not do."

V. G. D.

CLEANINGS FROM CORRESPONDENTS

The Soya Bean has already been mentioned in these columns. A friend from Bareilly writes:

"I have grown Soya Beans in my fields in this district. As a *kharif* crop it has proved very successful and some friends who have tasted its different preparations like it much. A friend of mine has been using Soya Bean milk during all these war days of milk scarcity.

"In the coming rainy season it can be grown widely in all fields where rain water does not stand for long. It will be specifically a very suitable crop for sowing in any vacant land attached to bungalows. People in Western U.P. and the Punjab cannot take much rice without detriment to their health. *Bajra* and maize do not suit many persons. Wheat is scarce. Soya Bean may be a useful substitute in some if not many cases."

Shrimati Lilavati Munshi threw out some useful suggestions to the Bombay Municipal Corporation and the general public when presiding the other day over the annual general meeting of the Agri-Horticultural Society.

(a) To convert the Malabar Hill Slopes, with the exception of the hanging gardens at the top, from the Bombay Garage to Kemp's Corner, into vegetable gardens. This space could easily supply vegetables to a thousand persons;

(b) to use all house terraces with the help of modern methods for small scale cultivation of vegetables like tomatoes and greens;

(c) to convert by chemical means the City's refuse into manure;

(d) to encourage in children the healthy pastime of cultivating fruit plants, vegetables and cereals, both in school and at home, and thus early instil into them a sense of social service.

She rightly says that a vegetable garden, if laid out properly, can be a thing of beauty. The society is willing to give expert advice if needed.

A correspondent welcomes Gandhiji's suggestion of more raw vegetables and occasional complete or partial fasts. Simple diet plus *yogic* exercises will make many people lose their superfluous fat and improve their digestion. Most of the well-to-do man's maladies are due to wrong diet or overeating, both of which handicaps can easily be overcome by wise restriction in these difficult times.

Goat's milk can be produced very cheaply. In several large families there is enough food material thrown away daily, like peelings and the coarser parts of vegetables etc. to feed at least one goat.

In a country like ours where pasture lands today are unavailable and a very small percentage of farmers is able to keep milch cattle, it is the milk goat that must become the poor man's cow.

Clean milking and boiling helps to eliminate the odour and flavour objected to by some people in goat's milk.

Uruli, 28-3-'46

A. K.

AFTER NEARLY FOUR YEARS

It was a joy to return to Sevagram after the best part of four years and receive a warm welcome from the family here. Change is the one unchanging law of life. Small wonder, then, that I was greeted by many new faces and new landmarks.

Of the old, familiar landmarks Ba's and Mahadev's cottages are desolate without those loved figures. It is difficult to get used to their absence or not to be reminded of them daily, for they were more a part of Bapu's life than anyone else. But "why should we mourn for the blest?"

My time here has been very full and too short for me to take everything in or see all that I would like to see more closely and at greater leisure.

The Mahadev Mandir is a fine structure and a worthy memorial to him. It is used for meetings, for collective spinning and lectures. The acoustics are good and there is room to seat 400 persons. It is intended, in its vicinity or in a portion of it, to have a permanent museum for Khadi and all its implements as well as maps and charts showing progress etc. of our constructive work all over India.

The Khadi Vidyalaya has grown beyond recognition and now includes an all-round training course for village workers. There is a fine boarding hostel for boys. Accommodation can be provided for 80, but it is big enough for 100 students. The hostel is simple with large dormitories in which each student has a wooden bed, a stool, a small mat and a locker. All the processes of Khadi are taught and apart from improvements made so far, constant research is going on all the time. There are 36 looms, also housed in new buildings, all of them pit except four, which are "frame" looms. These latter are removable and therefore useful for schools. The equipment for the institution is made in the workshop and the buildings have all been put up with local material and village labour. The all-round village worker is trained, in addition to the science of Khadi, in sanitation, hygiene, cooking, dietetics, village economics, elementary history of India, history of the Congress and general knowledge. For Khadi training the qualification is VII Vernacular (or full primary). For all-round workers the equivalent of the matriculation is requisite. There are 60 students at the moment undergoing training which lasts two years. There is room for ten women but no girls, alas! have been so far forthcoming. This is a pity, for women village workers are just as much, if not really more, needed than men.

The Talimi Sangh has added a kitchen and dining room and a hall to their buildings since I was last there. They have taken over the buildings that used to belong to the Khadi Vidyalaya and utilize them for hostels for their boarders. Co-education exists. At the moment there are 60 children from the ages of seven upwards out of which number ten are girls. More girls would like to come but there is no room for them. A plot of land is available for a girls' hostel but owing to the high cost of labour and material as little as possible in the shape of new buildings is being undertaken. The children seem happy and contented. They come from neighbouring

villages and have improved in every way. Spinning continues to be the main craft through which education is imparted but in addition, there are numerous activities for the children. They have a small plot of land, where they grow flowers in beds allotted to groups. It was good to see sweet peas, hollyhocks, nasturtiums and larkspur making a colourful frontage to the building. Now, however, with the necessity for growing more food I imagine this plot of land too will grow carrots and cabbages instead of flowers! Not so joyous to look at but definitely joyous if it means so many more vegetables for some hungry mouths.

The kitchen proves an excellent training ground for the little ones. They do all the cooking under supervision of a member of the staff. They work out food values daily, weigh out the ingredients themselves and thus get practical lessons in arithmetic. The daily menu has been planned on a system of vitamins. The following account is educative. It has been given to me by the daughter of the Principal of the school who is receiving her education with the village children. She is eleven years old.

"Today, 7-1-46, it was our turn for kitchen work. We were twelve boys and girls. Two boys were suffering from itch, so they were sent for work in the garden. We first went in a line to the well and washed our faces, hands, feet and nails. The captain then asked us to stand in a line in front of the kitchen and inspected our hands, our nails, our hair and our clothes. He sent back boys whose nails were dirty to cut them. He then distributed our work. One for the cooking of *Khichadi*, one girl for the cooking of vegetables, one to cut and prepare raw vegetables, one to arrange for clean linen and vessels, one for recording and the rest for making *bhakris*, i. e. *Jowari rotis*.

Today's meal consisted of *Khichadi*, Brinjal curry, *bhakris* (*Jowari rotis*), salt, lemons, green chillies, water and milk 4 ozs."

More milk daily per head is aimed at but has not yet been attained. The cost of food per head is Rs. 10/- p. m.

The children do all the washing up of vessels and cleaning of their rooms. They have the care of two bullocks with whom they are on the friendliest terms. A *ghani* (oil press) has recently been purchased. I saw a boy of ten, presumably, in charge the day I visited. He was responsible for recording how much oil had been pressed in an hour and for putting it carefully away in the proper tin where it is stored. Physical exercises are compulsory in the morning. Games, folk dances and gardening provide outdoor relaxation in the afternoons. On the food provided it has been noted that children put on weight in the winter months.

The following gives an account in detail of the yarn produced:

Yarn produced during July 1944 to February 1945 (8 months) Grades I to V.

Grades	Average attend- ance	Weight.		Ave. count.	Equivalent of cloth	Wages	
		Hanks	srs. ch.			Rs. As.	P.
I & II	21	294½	15	1½	9	90	32 1 8
III	10	690½	28	12½	12	197	82 10 8
IV	5	499	20	12½	12	142	62 12 9
V	17	1300½	46	7	14	342	164 8 6
Total	53	2784	111	1½	...	771 Rs. 342	1 7

53 children spun 2784 hanks of yarn in 8 months which can produce 771 sq. yds. of cloth from July 1944 to February 1945. During the period of July 1945 to February 1946 the students themselves wove 443 sq. yds. of cloth in the school.

It would be well for those who are prejudiced against spinning to see the children enjoying this portion of their studies. They are able, without knowing as it were, to produce enough cloth to clothe themselves. When one sees what can be achieved in a comparatively short time against heavy odds one longs more than ever for a government of the people which would give to this life-giving scheme the money and encouragement of which it stands in need. Here, as elsewhere, the need for teachers who will look upon their task as a calling and not a profession, and training centres for them in every province, is very urgent.

There is a pre-basic school in Sevagram village itself run by Shantabai Nerulkar. She works for adult education also. Nursery schools and adult education are very necessary items in our curriculum of education. I was unable to see the school in action. But in a brief visit to the village I was struck by the improvement in cleanliness and a kind of aliveness in the inhabitants.

The training school is one of the main activities of the Hindustani Talimi Sangh. There are 36 students being trained at the moment from various provinces, barring Madras, where a training centre is already being carried on. The training lasts one year. Andhra has sent a strong contingent of women which is all to the good.

The hospital stands out, apart from its great utility, by the only colourful building in the neighbourhood. Why its walls were coloured a deep terra cotta is not known but it is a happy accident. Neatness and colour add to the charm of life and may not be disregarded when we start building model villages. There is no doubt as to the need for medical relief in all areas. Sevagram Hospital serves all the neighbouring villages in addition to Sevagram. The building is simple and cleanly kept. 16 in-door patients can be accommodated. There is a room for minor operations, a dispensary and examination room. For the hundreds of out-patients a thatched *shamiana* has been put up in the compound. The staff consists of a lady doctor, a *vaidya*, a fully trained dispenser with three helpers and three nurses who have been trained here. They are all heavily worked, because, in addition to this hospital there is an antenatal clinic in Sevagram village and two dispensaries in neighbouring villages which have to be visited at least twice a week. The need for qualified nurses and midwives for village service is very great. The surgeon performs the operation, the physician prescribes, but the burden of constant care and carrying out of orders is the nurse's task, without which no success can attend the work of doctors. Sevagram medical relief shows how much can be done by the right type of worker and is worthy of emulation. In all maiden effort, such as everything in Sevagram is, workers have to make shift and accommodate and adjust themselves as best they can. Those who are able to do so are true servants who count no cost too great for the cause they have espoused. I feel that Sevagram is not belying the name the ashramites chose for it themselves in the early years.

Sevagram, 15-2-46

A. K.

INSPIRING FOR WOMEN

It is a far cry from Assam to Kerala and yet Uruli village, unknown to anyone except its residents until Gandhiji took up his abode there the other day, was the meeting place of all the women agents so far appointed by the Kasturba Trust to organize and supervise work in the different provinces.

We of the towns have no idea of the uphill task that lies before village workers. When Thakkar Bapa suggested to Gandhiji that an Agents' meeting would be advisable, Gandhiji welcomed the idea. Fears and doubts are natural when one is faced with difficulties and these sisters had many things to ask. As Agents they had been asked why Gandhiji who talked of democracy should have been party to the appointment of single persons to run the work of Provinces instead of the originally formed committees? Tracing his line of thought Gandhiji explained how it was women's work and how he had felt he must make women shoulder the responsibility of it. In no other organization, not even in the Congress, had such a tremendous responsibility been thrown on women. The Agent's post throws all the burden of work on her in her area. It is immense but given industry and intelligence not only will the work grow but the Agent herself will grow in stature. She is there to serve and to give, not to possess. By this giving she will become the people's trusted servant. This is the royal road to democracy.

Gandhiji gave them a clear answer in respect to political work such as volunteering at polling booths. They were not there for that purpose. It was perfectly possible for them not to be in the Congress and yet be of it as he was himself. The work before them was to make women fit to take their place in society. If they succeeded in teaching them the correct way of life they taught them all they needed. Today they were steeped in the Stygian darkness of ignorance and superstition. With the removal of that, women would make freedom worth while.

He cited the good example of Kanu Gandhi who had said that in his camp soon to be started it would be his aim to teach the students how to battle against famine by tilling the ground, scavenging, cooking, bringing their own expenses with them, so that they need not be a liability on any one. Women have to work in famine areas with this ideal. It is ours to mitigate, not to aggravate the burden.

Asked as to what work he would lay most emphasis on so far as women were concerned, Gandhiji felt that sanitation and hygiene, owing to the lack of knowledge of which our people suffered so greatly, should take first place. Then there were evil customs which had to go, the useless expenditure on jewellery, and he made everyone laugh by his graphic description of a much jewelled woman patient with a huge nose ring, earrings, necklace, bracelets and anklets complete who had visited him as a patient that very morning! It was hard

to know what should come first. "Really all work in its own place is of equal importance." There is the very great necessity of teaching women the care and upbringing of children, discipline in their own lives in every department including eating. He placed maternity almost last in comparison with the above-mentioned. But nothing could be achieved without friendship with the women. That was the first and basic desideratum.

The pay of workers had caused much discussion. For Gandhiji it was the spirit of the worker that meant everything. Inasmuch as the labourer was worthy of his hire a decent living wage must be paid, but it was the work and not the pay that should attract.

Were the women to be given the wheel as a revolutionary weapon as he had said it was in the hands of a Jawaharlal? The answer was 'no'. How could it be such in the hands of an ignorant woman? But if every woman in India span then a silent revolution would certainly be created of which a Jawaharlal could make full use. Unless steam generated was put to proper use the engine would not run and the person generating the steam might himself be scalded by it even unto death.

Amongst the members were some staunch feminists who are anxious for women alone to run the show. To them Gandhiji said that the men who were there were serving the memory of one who was instinctively a village woman. Long before he himself had taken to village life as being the ideal life for service, Kasturba had shown her preference for it. Her heart was in Phoenix even in the far off South African days when he himself worked in a town. The men who were honouring her memory were only serving until such time as women were ready to take their place. "I am the only one whom you may find it hard to get rid of for I have always counted myself as a woman. I believe I know your sex and your needs better than you do yourselves."

He said the Kasturba Trust would have even a bigger place in national service when freedom was ours than it had today. For all would go to the winds if women were not properly trained. He hoped that every worker in the Trust would have a great deal to give to the new government. But we have got to generate that strength within us. We may not be frightened of making mistakes. Man is born to make mistakes but the great thing is to see our mistakes and learn from them. We should magnify our own errors so as to be deterred from falling into them again. Those who imagine that they never make mistakes are to be feared. He agreed with one of the members when she said that it was a great tragedy that the uplift of women has to be an item on the constructive programme. "Have we yet to find ourselves?" she asked. "Yes, indeed," was the reply. "And where better can you find yourselves than by being true to the highest traditions of Indian women by serving your unhappy sisters today?"

On the train to Delhi,
31-3-46

A. K.

SELF-SUFFICIENCY *VERSUS* COMMERCIAL KHADI

(By M. K. Gandhi)

We are ourselves responsible for the creation of this problem. We did not know the science of Khadi. We do not know it fully even now. Therefore, like children, we stumble again and again and thereby learn to walk. In order that we may not fall so as never to rise again we made use of a go-cart and are still using it. Having realized this the A. I. S. A. has to make a tremendous effort to vindicate its existence or else be wiped out. By A. I. S. A. is meant all its workers and includes even the spinners. It must be borne in mind that to make the spinners self-reliant and through their activity to achieve India's freedom is and ought to be the Association's goal. That we may not reach that goal should not cause undue worry. It is enough for us to know that it is the correct goal and having started the activity we have to correct our mistakes and go forward. That is the essence of the scientific method. No science has dropped from the skies in a perfect form. All sciences develop and are built up through experience. Perfection is not an attribute of science. Absolute perfection is not possible either for man or for the science that he creates. For example, astronomy is continually progressing. Many mistakes have been made and corrected. The process still continues. The same may be said of the science of Khadi.

If this is intelligently understood and fearlessly acted upon, replies to the questions presented from time to time become easy. The spinner must have full knowledge of all the processes from the beginning to the end, right up to weaving. In this lies the way to Swaraj. Up till now, knowingly or unknowingly, we have been producing Khadi solely for purposes of commerce. But this too has always been linked with the ideal of Swaraj. Had it not been so, even commercial Khadi would have failed and most probably Khadi for Swaraj would have remained a mere dream.

Commercial Khadi has been and still is our go-cart, so to speak. To the spinner to have her cotton carded by others has been and still is an additional prop. Only as we progressively give up these props will we bring into being Khadi for Swaraj. Those branches where commercial Khadi is being produced and carding carried on as an independent activity should, if possible, be closed down. Life is, however, made up of compromises. Therefore, let it be said that the props should be given up as quickly as possible. Those who have faith and knowledge will be the first to do so. Where sincere and earnest efforts are made, the question of competition should not arise.

One aspect of the present situation needs attention. Those who spin for their livelihood will willingly learn the new processes because thereby their earning capacity will increase. Today this section is diminishing because other and easier

sources of income are open to them. For them it is not a moral question. They take what is easiest as, for example, collection of leaves for making *bidis*. It is our duty to impart true knowledge to them and help them up the steep road to Swaraj and make them healthy and hardy in the process of climbing. If we cannot do this we shall deservedly lose our existence. Therefore, we can only have dealings with the man or woman who spins with understanding.

Another thing that has to be remembered is that spinning is now one of the recognized avocations and will, therefore, continue. So we need not worry about the production of commercial Khadi. Whatever difficulties may arise from the above have to be overcome by the workers. To ask whether this or that comes within this framework is a sign of mental laziness and ignorance. He who cannot draw deductions cannot be said to know geometry. The same is true of all sciences.

New Delhi, 3-4-'46

(From *Harijanbandhu*)

WHAT IS THE LAW?

(By M. K. Gandhi)

Confused writes:

"I grant that Italy, Germany and Japan have lost their power, but is the loss due to their faith in violence, as you would say, or is it due to their exhaustion brought about by fortunes of war? Will you hold that Britain, Russia and America have been successful because of their non-violence?"

Thus argues a correspondent whom I have paraphrased without diminishing the force of his argument. The questioner has failed to perceive that in the writing quoted by him, I have said nothing about the so-called victorious Powers. But I have said elsewhere that their victory is an empty boast if they do not learn the lesson while there is time and do not shape their life in accordance with the law of non-violence. I believe wholly in the truth that "those who take the sword will perish by the sword". There is no doubt that the victors employed the same means as the vanquished. There was only a question of degree. The victorious parties already seem to be on the verge of quarrelling among themselves. If another war has not already begun, it is because no one is ready to enter upon it. After all men are not machines. They cannot be continually fighting without being reduced to the state of beasts. One has to hope, for the sake of humanity, that they will do some hard thinking and discover the truth that the common man of whom the world is composed gains nothing by cutting his fellowman's throat and that the fruits of peace are infinitely superior to those of war. Ingenuity employed in devising methods of destruction lowers, whereas when employed in devising ways of building it befits mankind.

New Delhi, 5-4-'46

GANDHIJI ON NEW SPIRIT*

(By H. N. Brailsford)

When last I was in Poona, Gandhi was a prisoner and I was not allowed to meet him. Then, the town, gloomy and angry, was involved in a general strike. Today it is celebrating the spring carnival in a mood of gaiety.

Gandhi in his turn was happy when I met him, for Mr. Attlee's speech in the Indian debate had just opened the road to independence. He looked well and very much less than his age. He talked easily without a trace of tension. His manner was never solemn and often he relaxed in a humorous chuckle. In a way hard to define, one felt that this man was speaking for India. Though his moral stature lifts him high above the average man, he interprets what is typical and enduring in this nation's outlook. He warned me, none the less, that he would be speaking only for himself and not for the Congress.

Our talk took its start from the Prime Minister's recognition of India's right to choose independence. This, Gandhi welcomed, and not only this, but the whole tone of the speech. "But I can't forget," he went on, "that the story of Britain's connection with India is a tragedy of unfulfilled promises and disappointed hopes. We must keep an open mind. A seeker of truth will never begin by discounting his opponent's statement as unworthy of trust. So I am hopeful, and indeed, no responsible Indian feels otherwise. This time I believe that the British mean business. But the offer has come suddenly. Will India be jerked into independence? I feel to-day like a passenger who has been hoisted in a basket-chair on to a ship's deck in a stormy sea and has not yet found his feet. There should have been some psychological preparation, but even now it is not too late. The tide of bitterness had risen high and that is not good for the soul. The last two months should have been filled with generous gestures. This is a milestone not only in India's history and Britain's, but in the history of the whole world."

Gandhi's meaning was clear. The British Government had done the right thing, but in its manner of doing it, he missed the big touch. When I asked him for concrete illustrations, he chose two. The release of the political prisoners had been gradual and was still incomplete. "There was no danger to fear. If independence is coming, would these men have opposed it? A complete amnesty would have captured the people's imagination. When you are about to transfer power, you should do it boldly."

He went on, to speak of the salt tax. "Its abolition would be a gesture the poorest peasant could understand. It would mean even more to him than independence itself. Salt in this climate is a necessity of life, like air and water. He needs it for himself, his cattle, and his land. This monopoly will go the instant we get independence. Then why not abolish it today? By such acts the Government could have created a feeling among the masses that the new era has already dawned."

INDEPENDENCE v. DOMINION STATUS

So much for the preparation for independence. I now reminded Gandhi that many Englishmen find it hard to understand why Indians prefer independence to Dominion Status. His answer was startling: "There was a time when I used to swear by Dominion Status and actually preferred it to independence. That was my attitude during the first World War. I even used, in writing to Lord Chelmsford, the Viceroy of those days an expression that has often been quoted against me. I wanted to evoke in the Indian breast the same loyalty to the British Crown that there is in the breast of an Englishman. It was an English footballer who converted me to independence. With a laugh, Gandhi explained that he was referring to C. F. Andrews, who had been a notable athlete at Cambridge, as well as a don. Gandhi added: "Andrews made me understand the significance of the King-Emperor's title. The British King is King also in the Dominions, but he is the Emperor of India. India alone makes the Empire. The Dominions are peopled by your cousins. But we Indians, with our different culture and traditions, can never belong to the British family. We may belong to a world-wide family of nations, but first we must cease to be under-dogs. So, I set myself to win independence. You may object that by so doing I am throwing away the protection of the British army and navy. India would not need them, if she were truly non-violent. If, in the glow of freedom, she could live up to that creed no power on earth would ever cast an evil eye upon her. That would be India's crowning glory and her contribution to the world's progress."

"If only Englishmen could follow this argument of mine, they would make their offer of independence in a different tone altogether. Today, they insist that Dominion Status is the best gift they can possibly bestow: still, if Indians do choose independence, they shall have it. No, that is the wrong attitude. I should like to hear Englishmen saying: 'For the world's sake and for ours as well as your own, you shall have independence today, even as we have it.'"

ALLIANCE WITH BRITAIN

With some sense of incongruity, for I was descending to a lower level, I now asked Gandhi to face the anxieties of his English listeners and tell them whether Indian independence would make for Britain's security and the world's. He answered that the British need never fear an independent India. If they leave India as willing friends, she in her turn will always remain friendly. But Britain, I told him, might hope for some assurance of friendship. Would an independent India be willing to enter into an alliance with Britain?

Gandhi's answer came promptly: "Supposing India said no, would you make the recognition of India's independence contingent upon her entering into an alliance with Britain? If you did that, it would immediately lower the value of your offer and rob it of all grace. The proper attitude is to meet India's claims as a matter of right, even if she wanted

* Reproduced from the 'Hindu', Madras.

to be unfriendly and pay you back in your own coin. No calculations entered into the British mind, when they settled with the Boers at the end of a bloody war, and the Boers have stayed friends ever since."

I replied that Britain has made up her mind to end the coercive connection with India. But living as she does in a perilous world, it is inevitable that she should ask the question whether as an ally in a defensive war she would be entitled to use India's strategic bases and ports against the aggressor. If that question were asked in no bargaining spirit, could India give a reassuring reply?

"Englishmen", Gandhi answered, "must learn to be *Brahmins*, not *Banias*." The *Bania* I should explain is the trader, or as Napoleon put it, the shopkeeper. The *Brahmin* is the man who is intelligent enough to rank the moral above the material values of life."

"A Gujarati novelist," Gandhi went on, "has said that Englishmen are soldiers and *Brahmins*, but not *Banias*. That was a generous verdict, but it was mistaken. Englishmen have still to evolve the British *Brahmanical* spirit. Even the British soldier still calculates and bargains like a *Bania*, and fails to reach the highest type of courage. I still cherish the hope that the British will respond to the non-violent spirit of India. As the author of that movement, I know what it has meant for the world. The non-violent spirit is the greatest thing in life. I feel it is my responsibility to help my brothers not to degrade themselves by bargaining. If you and we can rise to this moral height, no danger can alarm us. It is probable that many members of the Congress will not take this view and may be willing to discuss an alliance today. But independence should come free as air: don't let us bargain over it."

In reply to a further question, whether a defensive alliance might be discussed when independence is ratified by treaty, Gandhi replied: "If India feels the glow of independence she probably would enter into such a treaty of her own free will. The spontaneous friendship between India and Britain would then be extended to other Powers and, among them, they would hold the balance, since they alone would possess moral force. To see that vision realized, I want to live for 125 years."

This was the high moment of our talk. I had heard Gandhi's message. But there are still some details I ought to report. He said that he hoped for a mutually helpful commercial treaty between a friendly Britain and an independent India. For goods that India needed to import, he was even ready to give Britain a preference.

PAKISTAN QUESTION

While we talked of Pakistan, Gandhi said that, if no other method of solution succeeded, he was prepared to submit the whole issue to international arbitration. Nor should we forget that expedient, if any insoluble question arose between Britain and India, for example over debts. But he saw no

blank wall of difficulty ahead. His last words were that difficulties make the man.

I came away with the sense that I had been talking to a brave man who has the courage to believe that human society can be built only on moral principles. Amid our preoccupations over military perils he stands aloof and repeats, with unshaken faith his creed that safety is attainable, only when men learn to treat each other as brothers and equals. No lesser means will avail.

THE CASE FOR THE BULLOCK

Now that machinery threatens to overrun our agriculture and transport as a part of so-called planning, it is necessary to sum up the case for the bullock who is doomed to destruction if that threat materializes.

We must have milk, more milk and still more milk. We must therefore have cows, and if we have cows, the bullocks will be always with us, for whom we have to provide and can provide full employment only if we yoke them to the plough, to the cart and to the *ghani*. If we fail to do this, we shall be reduced to the same plight as the Western nations who slaughter all bull calves except a few which are reared as stud bulls.

The tractor is a machine; the bullock also is a machine, though not so powerful as the tractor. But the bullock is a living machine, and contact with such harmless animals has been a potent factor in the onward march of human civilization. I am not sure that the elimination of animal power and the installation of lifeless machinery in the Western countries has not something to do with the brutalization of human nature to which frequent and fierce wars bear witness in common with other evils peculiar to the West.

This is the humanitarian argument, which must be reinforced by the economic argument. We shall now deal with this latter, and in doing so make free use of a chapter in Shri N. G. Apte's *Thoughts and Work about Villages* entitled 'Economics of the Bullock' (Publisher: Shri Sardesai, Samarth Bhat Press, Poona 2).

The bullock is not only a living tractor; it is also a living fertilizer factory and gives us farmyard manure which supplies nitrogen and improves the porosity of the soil, thus helping to increase the moisture content of the soil as well as proper aeration. These three factors are essential to plant growth. 'No amount of concentrated manure would help if the porosity of the soil and consequent aeration of the soil are not improved.'

Artificial manures are an unmitigated curse, as has already been shown in these columns. Then there is green manuring with *sann* hemp and other leguminous plants, but that too compares unfavourably with farmyard manure. For, the green manure occupies the soil for a season from the time of planting till it is sufficiently decayed, but cannot be fed to the animals. On the other hand if we grow a fodder crop instead of the green manure on the same piece of land, at the end of the season we would get fodder enough for two

animals. These animals would work for us the whole year and give us the fodder back in the form of manure better adapted for assimilation by the soil, with probably some additional nitrogen derived from metabolic processes of the animal body.

Most of the nitrogen taken from the soil will be returned in the dung as the bullock requires only carbohydrates for work. These carbohydrates are no good as a manure as most of the carbohydrate material in the crop is fixed from the atmosphere during the process of metabolism in the plants and is not drawn from the soil. Thus the bullock utilizes the energy which is wasted when a green manure is ploughed into the soil. Then again farmyard manure feeds the soil better than the green manure, having passed through the animal system and thus having been acted upon by decomposing agents present in that system.

The bullock's function as the manufacturer of a first class fertilizer is not the only point where it scores over the machine. For, no machine ever invented can perform the various duties that the bullock discharges. The bullock can work fast as well as slow. It can not only be yoked to the plough, it can be used in crushing the earheads as well as in carting the grain to the market. All this it does, while subsisting on the straw or the cake left after the grain and the oil have been utilized for human consumption. This oil too is extracted by the same animal. A pair of bullocks costs a few hundred rupees, but if it is supplanted by machinery, the farmer must go in for an oil engine, a motor truck, a tractor, small motor-driven harrows and what not, which would cost him goodness knows how many times as much. Then again he must purchase fuel in the shape of oil, which cannot be produced not only on his own field but even in his own country.

The main agricultural operations of ploughing, harrowing, sowing and interculturing keep the bullocks busy for only three or four months in the year. During the rest of the year they can be and should be used for carrying goods as well as passengers, for crushing oilseeds and so on. The bullocks are capable of doing all this, while the specialized machinery would remain idle during the long dull season.

Extraction of oil by machinery is profitable on the face of it, but the profits reappear on the debit side of the cultivator's account, with nothing on the credit side to counterbalance the debit.

We shall close with a final quotation from Shri Apte's valuable study:

'Machinery may be introduced when the existing man and animal power is fully occupied. At present this power is not fully utilized, and therefore there is no occasion for the introduction of machinery.'

V. G. D.

Notes

Eating With Harijans

Q. How can a vegetarian caste Hindu sit down to food in the home of a meat-eating Harijan?

A. A vegetarian caste Hindu can eat vegetarian food in the home of a meat-eating Harijan. Interdining does not imply that one should eat everything that is put before one. All that is necessary is that the food, the plates on which it is served, and the hands that have cooked it should be clean. The same applies to water. Nor does interdining mean that people should eat out of the same plate or drink out of the same glass. There should be no breach of hygiene.

Ramanam

Q. Is it not enough to have *Ramanam* in one's heart or is there something special in its recitation?

A. I believe there is special merit in the recitation of *Ramanam*. If anyone knows that God is in truth residing in his heart, I admit that for him there is no need for recitation. But I have not known such a person. On the contrary, my personal experience tells me that there is something quite extraordinary in the recitation of *Ramanam*. Why or how is not necessary to know.

(From *Harijansevak*)

Ministerial Salaries

Ministers and members of the provincial assemblies are in their respective places as servants of the people in every sense of the term. The British scale of pay cannot be copied by them except at their cost. Nor need all draw payments because a certain scale is allowed. The scale fixes the limit up to which they may draw. It will be ludicrous for a monied man to draw the full or any payment. The payments are meant for those who cannot easily afford to render free service. They are representatives of the poorest people in the world. What they draw is paid by the poor. Let them remember this salient fact and act and live accordingly.

New Delhi, 6-4-'46

M. K. G.

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